

**PROTECTING THE PUBLIC:
Audit Survey of ATF's
Planning and Expenditures for the Integrated
Violence Reduction Strategy**

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Abbreviations

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
AVCAP	Armed Violent Criminal Apprehension Program
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
IVRS	Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy
NICS	National Instant Criminal Background Check System
OIG	Office of Inspector General
U.S.	United States

*The Department of the Treasury
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Bradley A. Buckles
Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) is responsible for enforcing the Federal firearms laws. The Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy (IVRS) is an ATF initiative aimed at reducing gun-related crime and violence through a comprehensive approach towards enforcement of firearms laws. While IVRS is a national strategy, ATF recognizes that different communities have different law enforcement concerns. Accordingly, IVRS integrates several core concepts that are adapted and applied to address the specific law enforcement needs of a community.

We initiated an audit survey of IVRS in accordance with the *OIG Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 Annual Plan* and because IVRS appeared to be a major new ATF initiative. The purpose of an audit survey is to determine whether a more detailed audit of a program or activity is warranted. The specific objectives of this survey were to determine if ATF has (1) dedicated the appropriated funds and full-time equivalents (FTE) to the program and (2) adequately planned IVRS to meet the objectives of the program. We performed survey fieldwork from June to December 2001 at ATF Headquarters in Washington, D.C. and at the Chicago field division. We interviewed ATF officials and evaluated records and procedures. The scope of this review covered October 1, 1999 through June 30, 2001. See Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the survey objectives, scope, and methodology.

Results in Brief

During the 2 years of our audit period, ATF received an increase in funding of \$62.2 million and 305 FTEs for IVRS. IVRS is not a new initiative, but instead the strategy is a way to add emphasis to existing ATF programs that target violent crime. Because all ATF firearms programs support IVRS, the appropriated funds could be spent in many different ATF program areas. For FY 2000, ATF dedicated the appropriated IVRS funds and FTEs to four existing firearms programs. If spending continued at the levels we saw as of June 2001, FY 2001 expenditures in these four programs should also meet IVRS targets.

Because IVRS was not a new initiative, extensive additional planning was not required on ATF's part to meet the strategy's objectives. ATF's ability to meet its IVRS objectives is dependent upon the success of the individual programs and activities that make up the strategy. Although ATF acknowledged that it does not have outcome-based measures to evaluate its performance, the total number of IVRS-related outputs increased anywhere from 13 to 99 percent in FY 2000, according to unaudited data in ATF reports.

Based on the information developed during our survey, we do not plan to conduct any further audit work on IVRS at this time. Therefore, we are not making any recommendations in this report.

Background

IVRS sets forth a three-part plan to reduce gun violence by coordinating and integrating ATF's firearms enforcement efforts. IVRS incorporates efforts at the Federal, State, and local levels to accomplish the following:

- Remove violent firearms offenders from communities, including those who illegally use, possess, or attempt to acquire firearms.

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- Deny firearms access to criminals and others who cannot legally possess them through regulation of the firearms industry and investigation of illegal traffickers of firearms.
 - Prevent violence and firearms crimes through community outreach.

In March 2000, the ATF Director explained IVRS to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Treasury and General Government this way:

IVRS is a national enforcement strategy that integrates several core concepts which are adapted and applied in varying formulas to address the specific law enforcement needs of a community. For example, Project Exile in Richmond, Virginia, and Project Ceasefire in Boston Massachusetts, are two different, yet equally successful examples of IVRS One of the purposes of the Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy is to allow U.S. Attorneys and ATF managers to collectively identify their unique crime problems and formulate appropriate actions to address them. Through the Violent Crime Coordinator, Armed Violent Criminal Apprehension (formerly Achilles) Programs, as well as through the Firearms Trafficking Program, ATF investigates and facilitates the prosecution of firearms violators. These programs are components of the Integrated Violence Reduction Strategy.

As described above, many of ATF's firearms programs support IVRS. For example, the Armed Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (AVCAP) seeks to identify, investigate, and recommend prosecution of a wide range of firearms offenders. The National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), which enforces the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, is also a part of IVRS. Other key components of the strategy include illegal firearms trafficking enforcement, regulation of the firearms industry, the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative, crime gun tracing and analysis, and the Gang Resistance Education and Training program.

ATF received increases in funding of \$12.6 million and 56 FTEs in FY 2000 and \$49.6 million and 249 FTEs in FY 2001 to expand IVRS. These increases build upon the Bureau's base resources of \$400 million and 2,650 FTEs already devoted to IVRS-related programs.

ATF is required to provide the House Appropriations Committee with a detailed report describing the correlation between the substantial increase in funding for the IVRS initiative and the impact such funding has had on the number and effectiveness of investigations and interdiction efforts. The report must also describe specific activities and the level of obligations and FTEs devoted to each major IVRS component.¹ The first such report was issued in May 2001. ATF planned to report future accomplishments quarterly, comparing them to the baselines established in the May 2001 report. The first quarterly report was completed in September 2001.

Results of Survey

We had originally believed that IVRS was one of ATF's most recent initiatives to fight violent crime, newly created in 2000. We learned that IVRS is not a new initiative, but is instead a way for ATF to add emphasis to those existing programs that target violent crime. In fact, IVRS was preceded by ATF's Integrated Violence Impact Strategy (IVIS), which began in about 1994. Existing ATF projects and initiatives evolved into the current strategy.

IVRS Funding Was Dedicated to Firearms Programs

We concluded that the funding and FTEs allocated to IVRS in FY 2000 were used for IVRS programs. If spending continued at the levels we saw as of June 2001, funding and FTEs used for IVRS in FY 2001 should also meet IVRS targets. In FY 2000 and 2001, ATF received an additional \$62.2 million and 305 FTEs for IVRS. The funds appropriated for IVRS could be spent

¹ This requirement is from H.R. 106-756.

in many different ATF program areas, since IVRS covers all ATF firearms programs. ATF has increased spending in four violent gun crime areas as a result of IVRS: (1) AVCAP, (2) NICS, (3) illegal firearms trafficking enforcement, and (4) regulation of the firearms industry.

ATF has also increased staffing for IVRS programs. Since October 1999, ATF has increased total FTEs by 318. The number of special agents who actually work cases increased by 13 percent, while the number of inspectors increased by 18 percent. Increases in obligations and FTEs for the IVRS program exceed those specifically appropriated for this program.

It is important for field offices to be adequately staffed to handle all of the programs that ATF and the other Federal, State, and local officials determine are necessary to address the local crime problems. While some of our other audit work, such as our review of ATF's NICS program, has indicated that some field offices may not have sufficient staff to maintain the needed workload, ATF has agreed to evaluate its staffing and workload in response to the NICS report recommendations.² We also found that ATF has increased its staffing levels in several field offices where there appeared to be shortages. Once these staff members are on-board and fully trained, and ATF has completed its evaluation of staffing and workload, it will be important for ATF to ensure these actions have fully addressed our concerns.

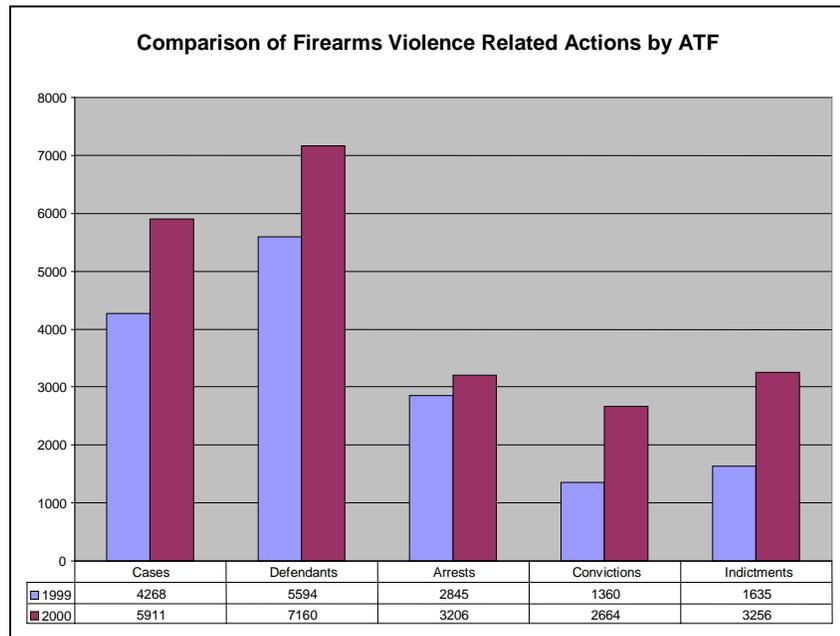
IVRS Did Not Require Extensive Additional Planning and Did Not Have its Own Performance Measures

Because IVRS was not a new initiative, extensive additional planning was not required on ATF's part. IVRS planning at the national level involved reviewing existing programs the field divisions were implementing to determine what initiatives were already in place. These programs were then packaged together as the IVRS initiative.

² PROTECTING THE PUBLIC: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Could Improve its National Instant Criminal Background Check System Program, OIG-02-004, November 1, 2001.

ATF did not have specific performance measures for IVRS. Whether IVRS meets its objectives depends upon the individual programs that each ATF field division implements and whether those programs are successful at reducing violent crime. ATF officials acknowledged that they have not established outcome-based performance goals to determine whether they are meeting the IVRS objectives, because it is difficult to determine a causal relationship between ATF efforts and reduction in crime. Based on ATF reports, however, the total number of outputs for violent crime related program areas (such as cases, defendants, arrests, convictions, and indictments) increased anywhere from 13 to 99 percent, from 1999 to 2000.³ See Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: ATF Performance Measures



Specifically, for four programs where ATF increased spending as a result of the IVRS appropriations, outputs have increased for three: AVCAP, NICS, and illegal firearms trafficking enforcement. While the number of inspections for the fourth area, regulation of the

³ We did not verify the accuracy of the information contained in ATF's reports.

firearms industry, decreased by about 50 percent between 1999 and 2000, the scope of the inspections increased.

We have previously reported that ATF had not developed performance measures for IVRS-related programs. For example, in August 2000, we reported that ATF did not have specific performance measures that showed the actual impact on crime rates for youths in cities as a result of participating in the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative.⁴ Also, in February 2001, we reported that ATF was not able to demonstrate the effectiveness of its firearms compliance inspection activities because it had not developed performance measures for these activities.⁵ In both cases, ATF officials agreed with our recommendations to develop such measures. Until specific performance measures are in place, it will be difficult for ATF to determine whether IVRS programs, and in turn the strategy itself, are meeting ATF's objectives.

* * * * *

We appreciate the cooperation we received from ATF officials during this audit survey. If you wish to discuss this report, you may contact me at (312) 886-6300, ext. 118. Major contributors to this report are listed in Appendix 2.

Roberta N. Rickey
Regional Inspector General for Audit

⁴ *Final Report on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' Implementation of the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative*, OIG-00-119, August 21, 2000.

⁵ *PROTECTING THE PUBLIC: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' Compliance Inspections Effectively Targeted Firearms Violators*, OIG-01-038, February 8, 2001.

We conducted this audit survey in accordance with the *OIG FY 2001 Annual Plan* and because we believed that IVRS was a new initiative started in FY 2000 that had potential to grow into a large program very quickly. We wanted to evaluate whether ATF was meeting the objectives of IVRS early in the program.

The objectives of this review were to determine if ATF has:

- dedicated the appropriated funds and FTEs to the program, and
- adequately planned IVRS to meet the objectives of the program.

Our review generally covered IVRS activities from October 1999 through June 2001. To accomplish our objectives, we conducted work at ATF's Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where we interviewed officials and other employees from the Offices of Firearms, Explosives, and Arson; Management/Chief Financial Officer; Field Operations; and Inspections. We also interviewed officials in the ATF Chicago Field Division about their IVRS activities. In addition, we interviewed members of the Chicago Police Department; the Cook County, Illinois State's Attorney's Office; and the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Illinois, concerning their involvement with ATF's IVRS program and the Chicago Field Division.

We reviewed policies, procedures, and strategies related to how IVRS was planned and carried out and how appropriated funds were used. We also compared ATF statistics from 1999 to 2000, to determine how outputs had changed since IVRS appropriations were received. Finally, we analyzed IVRS obligations for FYs 2000 and 2001 and compared staffing for FYs 1999, 2000, and 2001.

We did not conduct a comprehensive review of all the specific programs and projects that encompass IVRS to determine whether individual programs were being implemented effectively. For

example, we did not gather additional information on IVRS programs that we had recently audited, nor did we obtain data about programs that we planned to audit in the near future. Programs already covered included NICS, Compliance Inspections of Federal Firearms Licensees, Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative, Achilles Program, and Violent Offenders Program. Programs we planned to review in the future included Firearms Tracing and Online LEAD.

We conducted our survey between June 2001 and December 2001 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Chicago Regional Office

Roberta N. Rickey, Regional Inspector General for Audit
Janice A. Miller, Audit Manager
Aldon Hedman, Auditor-in-Charge
Larry Fugate, Auditor
Kathleen Hyland, Auditor

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